

The Strategic Audit of HRD as a Change Intervention

Zipco

Richard J. Torraco and Richard A. Swanson

This case study describes a unique opportunity in which HRD was both the main facilitator and the object of change. The goal of the intervention described in this case was to enable the transformation of a traditional training department within a large Fortune 50 company into an HRD function aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. The organization was facing aggressive foreign competition that mandated organization-wide change. If it could become more responsive to business needs, HRD would be in a pivotal position to provide the employee expertise and flexibility needed by the organization. In short, HRD needed to change to enable the organization to change. Not only did the change intervention lead to significant changes at the organization level, but the success of the intervention positioned HRD to serve as a benchmark for HRD functions throughout the corporation.

Background

The Fortune 50 plant in which the intervention took place is the corporation's largest domestic production facility. The plant, referred to hereinafter as the Zipco plant, manufactures 2,400 specific types of products for supply to 23 different divisions. It employs a yearly average of 11,000 employees and occupies a 16.2-acre facility. The average age of employees is 42 years, and the average length of service among employees is approximately 20 years. The plant manufactures several

This case was prepared to serve as a basis for discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective administrative and management practices. Names, dates, places, and organizations have been disguised by the case author.

popular consumer products, and average production yields more than 1.6 million items per day.

The training function at Zipco historically offered many classes to employees and benefited from the plentiful resources of a successful organization. Although there was a great deal of training activity in the organization, the purpose and job relevance of training were not always apparent. The need for the intervention originated in concern among management that the organization was not getting full value from its investments in training. As the catalogue of company-sponsored training programs grew over the years, managers sensed that many programs were not directly connected to business objectives and that some efforts might even be counterproductive. They sought information to assess the value of training and its alignment with organizational goals.

The authors of this chapter discussed these needs with management and agreed to serve as external consultants to the organization to carry out an intervention to assess the relationship of human resource development (HRD) to the business. The goals of the intervention were (1) to assess the present status of HRD resources and services, (2) to present a model for the strategic alignment of HRD as a desired future state, and (3) to develop an action plan for the transformation of HRD from the present to the future state. The strategic audit of HRD, including the creation of an action plan for the organization, was the primary vehicle through which the intervention was carried out.

The authors were joined early in the planning phase of the intervention by a corporate HRD manager who had been instrumental in gaining the approval and support of management for conducting the audit of HRD at this plant. Because the plant is the flagship domestic manufacturing facility of a Fortune 50 corporation that produces many popular consumer products, several of which are household names, the authors and corporate HRD manager recognized from the start that a successful intervention involving HRD at such a visible facility could be leveraged throughout the corporation to promote similar efforts to build state-of-the-art HRD functions. In addition, a line manager with more than 20 years of experience at this plant who had recently taken over responsibility for the training department joined the authors and the HRD manager, providing additional internal support for this change intervention (Swanson and Torraco, 1993).

Conceptual Model for Change

The conceptual model for change chosen to frame the intervention and guide its design was open systems planning (Cummings and

Srivastra, 1977; Jayaram, 1976). Open systems planning was originally derived from systems theory as a way of extending sociotechnical systems design beyond task applications to issues involving an entire organization and its environment (Clark and Krone, 1972). Open systems planning is a particularly useful way for organizations to assess their environments and plan strategies for relating to them. Open systems planning requires decision makers to take the following steps to address the dimensions of an organization's environment:

- Assess the external environment in terms of the expectations of external stakeholders.
- Assess how the organization responds to these environmental expectations.
- Identify the core mission of the organization.
- Create a realistic future scenario of environmental expectations and organization responses.
- Create an ideal future scenario of environmental expectations and organization responses.
- Compare the present and the ideal future, and prepare an action plan for reducing the discrepancies (Cummings and Worley, 1997).

This model was used by the authors in collaboration with the corporate HRD manager and the plant-level HRD manager to relate Zipco to its environment and to specify a role for HRD that was aligned with organizational goals. Change agents can follow the phases of the open systems planning model in a stepwise fashion to frame an intervention within the appropriate systems context. (For further discussion of open system planning as an intervention model, see Beckhard and Harris, 1987; Cummings and Srivastra, 1977; and Jayaram, 1976). A summary of how each phase of the open systems planning model led to the strategic audit is presented below:

- Although one of Zipco's major products, for which the consumer products plant was the exclusive producer, still commanded a 60 percent market share, new products from aggressive Pacific rim organizations had recently begun to erode this comfortable market share for the first time in organization's 106-year history. The organization needed to be more responsive to market demands to retain its current leadership position. In addition, there was increasing corporate interest in greater accountability in Zipco's HRD activity, especially with respect to HRD's connection to business goals.
- There was a great deal of HRD activity at Zipco, although its job relevance and contribution to key business needs were not always apparent.

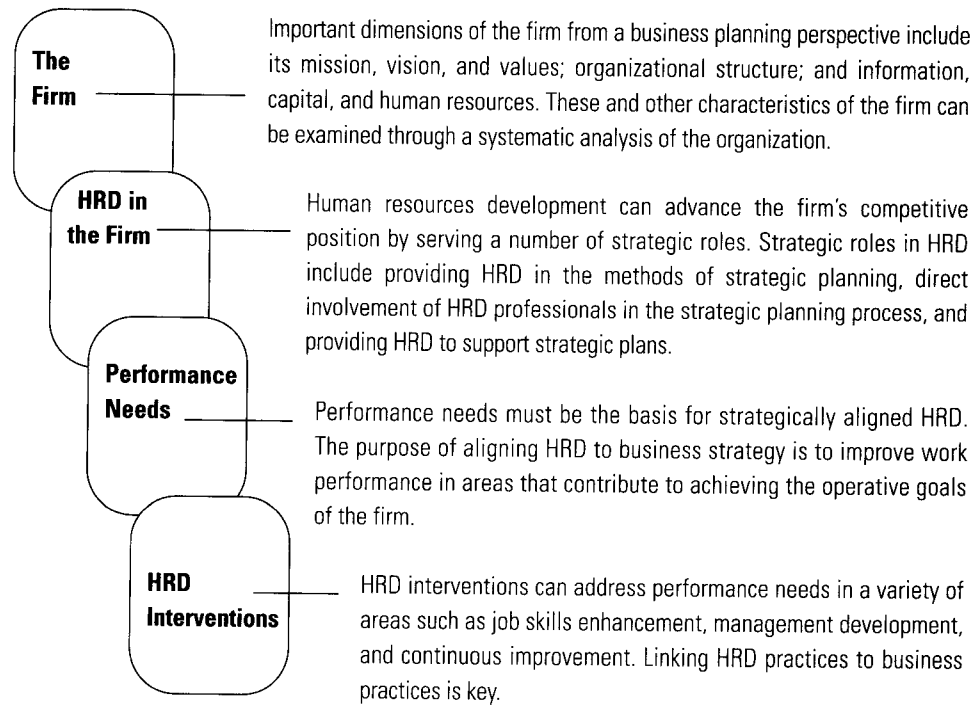
- Although a strategic business plan identified the organization's core mission and was revised annually, the strategic role of HRD as a key factor in business success was not included in the plan.
- The authors concluded that, without more emphasis on aligning HRD with business needs, the marginal return to the organization from training resources would continue and demand would increase for strategic change in HRD's relationship with the organization.
- The authors provided the organization with a model they had developed for the strategic alignment of HRD. This model served as a desired future state for the HRD function (see Figure 1).
- The strategic audit and action plan provided the catalyst and road map for transforming HRD from an activity-based to a strategically aligned component of the organization. This transformation of HRD was needed to enable the organization to adapt to internal and external forces for change.

The Audit as a Change Intervention

A variety of approaches were available to effect change in the HRD function at Zipco. Short-sighted change interventions have traditionally resulted in reducing HRD personnel, cutting programs, or changing management or reporting channels. Decentralizing HRD by distributing it among operational units or using external providers of HRD (outsourcing) is another way of restructuring HRD. Zipco, however, viewed HR practices, including HRD, as inherently valuable. Retaining HRD as an internal function of the organization was therefore an important consideration in the selection of an intervention strategy.

The HRD audit was selected as the change intervention of choice. The audit provides an across-the-board assessment of program strengths and weaknesses. It allows an organization to retain the strengths and flexibility of its own HRD function while identifying low-value-added programs for improvement or elimination. In addition, the audit offers other advantages, the clearest of which is efficiency. Comprehensive evaluations of training products and processes are expensive and time-consuming endeavors. Even evaluating a single training program can be costly and time-consuming—let alone assessing the value of the entire HRD function. Although auditors have the latitude to increase the depth and breadth of data sampled when the need arises, audit sampling plans are designed for data collection that is both effective and efficient. All aspects of a given function are sampled in a systematic way. The concept of auditing obviates the need for review of 100 percent of the available data. Several methods are available for designing effective

Figure 1. Strategic alignment.



Business Environment

The conditions outside the firm that influence its plans and practices constitute the business environment. Forces in the community, industry, society, and global economy exert pressures on the organization and shape its business strategy. Perennial environmental challenges to organizations are political, technological, cultural, and economic in nature.

plans for sampling data (Holmes and Overmyer, 1976; Lee, 1988; Lindberg and Cohn, 1972).

Another advantage of the audit is its compatibility with other business practices. Auditing has traditionally been accepted as an efficient method of evaluating the effectiveness of business practices, and businesspeople have acquired a certain comfort level with the idea of a periodic audit within their work sections or departments. In many business activities, the annual audit is a way of life. An audit of HRD, then, is consistent with audits of other business functions that provide vital support to the organization.

Use of the HRD audit as the primary vehicle for the intervention at Zipco was discussed with plant management to obtain their input and commitment to the process. Managers in key areas of the plant acknowledged that changes were needed in the relationship of HRD to the organization, and they were familiar with the use of auditing to evaluate a variety of organizational functions. Because audit results were likely to emphasize the need for substantive changes in HR and training practices, decision makers needed to indicate their willingness to implement these changes, difficult as they might be in an organization accustomed to a loosely aligned training department. It was not necessary to establish complete agreement among managers at this point as to the optimal role for HRD in the organization. Managers from various areas within the organization had different perspectives on the extent to which HRD was supporting business objectives; such divergence in managers' views of HRD's contribution to the business was to be expected. The findings of the audit would address HRD's role and the degree to which expectations were currently being met. What was needed from senior management at this point was affirmation of the strategic potential of HRD. This affirmation was evident; managers wanted HRD to be more responsive to the business and clearly expressed their support for the audit to begin the transformation process.

The Auditing Process

The auditing process is given structure by arising from a conceptual model in the same way that a construction project arises from an architectural design. A conceptual model is simply a way of thinking about something; an idea is often easier to grasp if it is represented by a graphic model or diagram. For a conceptual model to have value in guiding the HRD auditing process at Zipco, it had to represent the HRD function in the full environmental context within which it operated.

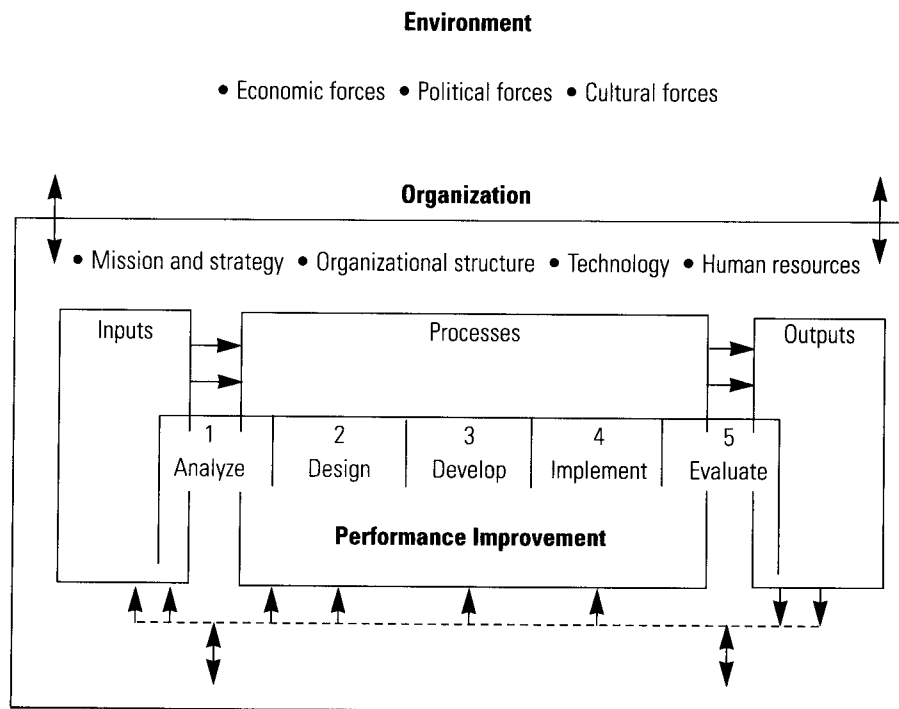
HRD is a system within a system—a vital function bounded by the opportunities and constraints of the larger organization. A systems model of HRD that embeds the entire organization within the general business environment was developed by Swanson (1994). This model was selected to guide the auditing process for data collection and analysis (see Figure 2). Providing effective training in organizations is a multiphase process that requires careful up-front analysis and professional follow-through. Without a systems approach to training and a template for how effective training can be accomplished, auditors

can become quickly lost in the myriad programs and paperwork that characterize many HRD functions today.

The goal of the audit at Zipco was to assess the strategic alignment of HRD with the organization. Consequently, all product lines and functions within the organization supported by HRD activities, with one exception, were included in the scope of the audit. (One department was excluded at the request of top management because of the sensitive nature of the new product prototypes that were being developed in this area). Data were collected through interviews and the examination of business and training records. The model in Figure 2 provided a template for the systematic collection and analysis of interview and documentary data. Within the program phases of the model, the audit examined the following processes and products:

Figure 2. Template for auditing data collection and analysis.

Template for auditing training, organizational development, and quality improvement programs: the five phases of the development process overlaid on the organization system and its environment.



- analysis
 - performance analysis (business performance, financial analysis)
 - expertise required to perform
- design
 - program design
 - lesson design
- development
 - instructor materials
 - student materials
- implementation
 - program management
 - delivery of training
- evaluation
 - satisfaction and learning
 - performance (business performance, financial analysis). In addition to these five phases of training activities, it was critical that the overall management of the training function be audited in
- management
 - leadership
 - policies
 - systems.

These six areas constituted the complete framework for organizing data collection and analysis of the HRD programs and processes to be audited. To get at specific data on HRD's contributions to business goals, auditors asked the following key questions of each program or process:

- What is being done?
- Why is it taking place?
- Who is involved?
- Is it efficient?
- Is it effective?

Overview of the Programs Audited

The programs included in the audit process at the Zipco plant were characterized as belonging to one of the nine training program categories listed below. Most programs did not have explicit stated purposes; the implied purposes (written by the authors) are therefore also provided.

1. Operator quality, inspection, and testing

Implied purpose: to communicate current quality standards and procedures for product quality documentation

2. Quality improvement (statistical process control [SPC], statistical techniques, design of experiments)
Implied purpose: to improve production systems through increasing process knowledge and control, and reducing variation in process conditions
3. Safety training
Implied purpose: to increase employee safety awareness, decrease on-the-job injuries and illnesses, and ensure compliance with health and safety regulatory standards and guidelines
4. Maintenance training
Implied purpose: to provide job information to newly assigned maintenance personnel, teach job skills to new employees, and upgrade the maintenance skills of experienced employees
5. Computer software and systems
Implied purpose: to provide training and specific assistance that would otherwise be unavailable (or ineffective) to computer software users
6. Operator qualification
Implied purpose: to ensure the competence of employees working as machine operators
7. Human resources
Implied purpose: to provide training in support of human resource policies and programs (including training for supervisors in performance appraisal, employee benefits, performance management, and drug and alcohol abuse)
8. Team action
Implied purpose: to enhance product quality and improve production systems through the use of team problem solving
9. Tuition reimbursement
Implied purpose: to provide company support for employees to develop expertise through formal education in areas valued by the company.

Audit Results

The power of the strategic audit of HRD is in the richness and detail of the audit data obtained across HRD programs. The audit provides an in-depth description of salient features of each program and evidence of the value of each program's contribution to the business. It follows an efficient plan for collecting information by using samples of data, and it yields rich, detailed program descriptions derived from interviews and business and training records (see results section). The

quality and depth of information are needed for accurate input into management decisions about HRD's contribution to the business.

Without detailed data from the audit on the strengths and weaknesses of a particular program in question, it is easy for management to avoid making tough decisions about whether to support a program. For example, Zipco had invested substantial resources and training time in operator qualifications training. The purpose of this training was to ensure that machine operators were competent in the core job skills needed for maintaining high quality production runs; this was an important business objective that cut across product lines. However, the audit results showed that the training did not achieve this purpose. The data provided to support this conclusion included the following observations:

- There were no plantwide policies and procedures for when, how, or to whom operator qualification training applied.
- There was no clear connection between having received operator qualification training and improved performance as a production machine operator.
- There was no connection between receiving operator qualification training and individual work assignments made by supervisors (that is, untrained employees were assigned to cover weekend shifts or vacations, nonetheless).
- Management had not demonstrated its commitment to operator and production quality by putting teeth into the operator qualification program (for example, by shutting down the line if there was not a certified operator on duty).
- Employee perceptions of the operator qualifications program were generally confused or negative. Lack of objective criteria for selecting trainer-developers in this area had created tension among employees and contributed to their confusion.
- Written operator guides were outdated and did not follow any standard design. In addition, there were few job aids to guide operator performance. Operator guides and job aids should be logically connected to performance standards and the training program.
- There were no prescribed standards for evaluating operator qualification training and no methods (that is, accepted practices and forms) for documenting evaluation results.

Despite this negative assessment, several managers were personally invested in the training and were reluctant to voice criticism of it. One manager even publicly questioned the credibility of the auditors in an effort to defuse the impact of this assessment.

As the reluctance of Zipco managers shows, without detailed data from an audit that clearly communicate program strengths and weaknesses, management may avoid making tough decisions that require an organization to face difficult changes. An audit must “do its homework” and present accurate and detailed information as the basis for program decision making. The HRD audit at Zipco provided quality data that left little doubt about which programs supported the business and which did not.

The Audit Summary

HRD activities at Zipco were aimed at one of two objectives: (1) maintaining standard performance (performance at current levels), and (2) improving system performance and standard performance.

All nine program categories were assessed on the extent to which they met their intended performance objectives. The matrix shown in Table 1 summarizes the assessments. The program categories were also assessed on the extent to which they reflected the five phases of a systematic process that is performance-based (see Table 2):

- analysis (performance and expertise)
- design
- development
- implementation
- evaluation (performance and expertise).

Presentation and Feedback of Audit Results

The complete data analysis given above concluded the formal auditing process. The analysis was presented to the top management team at Zipco in the formats used in Table 1, Audit summary matrix, and Table 2, Evidence of professional practices at each program phase.

The presentation of the audit results to the top management team allowed team members to see the full scope and outcomes of the audit at its conclusion. More importantly, however, it gave them an opportunity to discuss the results with the auditors and ask questions about each program’s strengths and weaknesses as reported. A meeting for this purpose was attended by Zipco’s general manager, all product line managers, and the managers of key staff departments, including training. The audit results were framed by the auditors as data that belonged to the organization and needed to be acted on by management. The management team members were encouraged to continue their ownership of the HRD transition process that began

Table 1. Audit summary matrix.

Program Areas	Objective of Program		
	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
a. Operator Quality, Inspection, and Testing	X		
b. Quality Improvement			X
c. Safety Training		X	
d. Maintenance Training			X
e. Computer Software and Systems		X	
f. Operator Qualification			X
g. Human Resources	X		
h. Team Action			X
i. Tuition Reimbursement		X	

with their initial commitment to the audit intervention. After full discussion of the audit results, the following recommendations for action were presented to management by the auditors.

Strategic Plan

- Develop a strategic plan that links high-performance organization efforts, quality improvement, team action, SPC, and personnel training to the achievement of key business goals and to each other.
- Appoint a strategic high-performance organization steering committee.
- Develop a strategic plan and provide an opportunity for all managers and employees to react to it before it is finalized.

Table 2. Evidence of professional practices at each program phase.

Program Area	Analyze perf. exper.		Design	Develop	Implement	Evaluate perf. exper.		Summary Rating
a. Operator quality, inspection, and testing*	M	H	M	M	M	H	M	M
b. Quality improvement*	L	L	L	M	M	M	L	L
c. Safety training	M	M	L	L	L	L	M	L
d. Maintenance training	L	L	M	M	M	L	L	L
e. Computer software and systems	L	M	L	M	M	L	L	L
f. Operator qualification*	L	L	L	M	L	M	L	L
g. Human resources	L	M	H	H	H	M	L	M
h. Team action*	L	L	M	M	L	L	L	L
i. Tuition reimbursement	M	M	L	L	L	M	L	I
Summary Rating	L	M	L	M	M	L	L	

*programs judged critical to the business

H = High; consistent evidence/good practice
M = Medium; some evidence/marginal practice
L = Low; no evidence/poor practice

- Finalize the strategic plan and communicate it continuously to all employees.

Management Leadership

- Provide leadership for the high-performance organization and training programs to ensure the improvement of work systems and the development of worker expertise crucial to the accomplishment of business goals.
- Support the person appointed to a new position of organization development coordinator (ODC) as the leadership person responsible for articulating and integrating the nine HRD program areas.
- Select and develop high-quality professionals to fill training roles, require job incumbents to get professional training, and give them an opportunity to acquire this training. Make retention and advancement in key HRD positions contingent on continuous professional education in the HRD field. Make this emphasis on professional qualifications apply to those responsible for HRD at all levels of the organization.
- Require regular reporting of plans, goals, and results of HRD programs.

Organization Development Leadership

Affirm the newly appointed ODC as the person who systematically manages the integration of training, development, and quality improvement activities with strategic business needs.

- Make this position key for ensuring the strategic alignment of HRD with business goals.
- Manage efforts to improve work system performance and job performance through the ODC.
- Involve both team action processes and SPC—coordinated through the ODC—in every performance improvement project.
- Reaffirm team action as a means for improving business outcomes.
- Streamline team action training for employees needs to be streamlined; ensure that team action leaders gain additional training in performance analysis skills.

Training Leadership

- Up to this point, training has been administered at the plant under a “training for activity” philosophy, rather than a systematic “training for performance” perspective aimed at business results. Initiate a major shift to accommodate the change from surveying training wants to responding to business goals and performance needs.

- Ensure that the training coordinator develops knowledge and skills in the performance approach to training through professional education in HRD.
- Ensure that the training coordinator, as the resident expert in systematic, performance-based training, assists, consults with, and oversees the many people at the plant who are engaged in—and will continue to engage in—HRD efforts in their training assignments.
- Consider hiring an expert external consultant in the HRD field to assist in the transition.

Professional Training Skills

- Provide those responsible for training Zipco employees with professional preparation for their training roles, and establish accountability for training activities throughout the plant. At present there is a serious lack of professional expertise in all phases of the development process—analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation.
- Purposefully move away from the activity-based model of training to a systematic, performance-based model. Training should be based on sound performance analysis instead of “wants analysis” (that is, maintenance training).
- Establish professional expectations and accountability for the following positions:
 - the ODC
 - product managers (expectations for employee training)
 - general supervisors (expectations for employee training)
 - the training coordinator
 - trainers in specific areas (SPC, safety, maintenance, etc.)
 - a team action supervisor
 - team action facilitators
 - trainer-developers.
- Adopt a common, systematic approach to training throughout all levels and programs of training at Zipco.
- Make the selection of trainer-developers an open process that is merit based:
 - Establish minimum entry qualifications, professional development expectations, and performance standards for trainer-developers.
 - Offer the trainer-developer positions publicly to the broadest possible base of employees.
- Ensure that trainer-developers possess or develop competencies in three areas:

- competence on the job as a skilled operator or production worker
- competence in the design and development of training materials
- competence in training delivery and assessment of job and task performance.

Barriers to Performance

- Eliminate barriers to developing and utilizing expertise in the workplace by eliminating incentive pay and developing a means of connecting work assignments to documented expertise.
- Recognize that incentive pay has not been linked to performance.
- Recognize that incentive pay has acted as a barrier to operator qualification training and cross-training.
- Recognize that incentive pay inconsistencies across departments have created resentment among employees.
- Establish a clear link between work assignments and employee expertise.

HRD Outcomes of the Intervention

There are several ways to determine the success of a change intervention; one of the most meaningful is to assess the extent to which the goals for which the change effort was established have been realized. The outcomes listed below directly address several of the recommendations for action for improving the HRD function and indicate the overall success of the change intervention at Zipco.

- A top-level leadership position to direct the plant's HRD efforts was created shortly after the audit was completed. The holder of this position, the high-performance organization coordinator, is responsible for all plant policies and strategic planning for workforce development and reports directly to the general manager.
- All product line and department managers are responsible for articulating and integrating HRD within their areas. They participate in assessing departmental and plantwide HRD needs, and they have responsibility for supporting and evaluating HRD in their functional areas.
- Employees responsible for the development and delivery of all aspects of HRD at Zipco are receiving professional education to enhance their competence in this area. To date, seven employees have earned professional certificates in HRD from a major university, and four are pursuing baccalaureate or graduate degrees in this area.
- Surveys were administered to managers approximately two years after the intervention to determine their perceptions of how respon-

sive HRD had become to Zipco business needs and goals. Managers stated that HRD had become a valued partner in providing the employee expertise needed in operational areas, and nearly all managers cited instances in which specific business objectives could not have been achieved without the support of HRD.

Organizational Outcomes of the Intervention

Following the road map provided by the audit, the HRD function has become more responsive to business goals by developing the employee expertise needed to reach these goals. In this way, the audit intervention has catalyzed strategic change; and it has enabled the organization to advance its competitive position on a solid base of state-of-the-art expertise continuously supported by HRD. As is consistent with the open systems planning model that guided the initial design of the intervention, the following organization and corporate-level outcomes demonstrate the success of the audit at a higher level of strategic analysis—that of improving the relationship of the organization with its environment:

- With input from the corporate level, the organization has overhauled its strategic planning process. An HR/HRD component, overseen by the ODC, has been fully integrated into the planning process. Input to strategic HR/HRD issues is now solicited from all product line and department managers. All employees are given the opportunity to react to drafts of strategic plans before they are finalized.
- The organization continues to require top performance from all departments and support units simply to prevent erosion of its current position in the consumer products market it serves. HRD has developed the employee expertise needed to ensure consistent, high-quality products and processes. Without this commitment to customer value so strongly supported by HRD, the organization could not withstand the aggressive market challenges posed by foreign competitors. Zipco remains the leader in its market sector.
- The direction and support provided by HRD have positioned it to serve as a benchmark for other HRD functions throughout the corporation. Moreover, it has become a prime example of the strategic relationship sought between HRD and an organization. The corporation now uses Zipco's HRD function to promote a separate new consulting service in workforce development and quality improvement, which it markets to outside organizations.

The auditors recently received a letter from the Zipco general manager in which the audit intervention was credited as being a primary impetus in the plant's transition to an "empowered workforce." HRD's leadership in developing and maintaining state-of-the-art work skills across the plant was cited as critical to achieving the company's high levels of production quality and business performance. The audit had served as HRD's baseline assessment and road map for its transition to a leadership position at the plant.

Results of the HRD Audit at Zipco

Operator Quality, Inspection, and Testing

This training achieves its purpose of communicating current quality standards and procedures for product quality documentation to employees.

- New and revised quality standards are issued by corporate headquarters and integrated into local production and inspection by a standards coordinator at the plant. Operator quality training is automatically updated with these changes.
- Although the content of operator quality is not specifically analyzed for training purposes, training is appropriately developed and delivered for the achievement of employee understanding. Content knowledge is evaluated three weeks after training through use of a 50-question, objective-format test on specific quality standards, basic mathematical computations, and use of a standard ruler. (In the interim, employees gain experience using quality standards and documentation systems in their own departments.)

Quality Improvement (Statistical Process Control [SPC], Statistical Techniques, Design of Experiments)

This training does not achieve its purpose of improving production systems through increasing process knowledge and control.

- Basic SPC is applied to a production process primarily on the initiative of local managers who want control charts run on particular processes.
- Concern has been voiced by some participants that SPC training cannot readily be applied to their processes.
- Terminal objectives for the basic course have not been established, and outcomes of the training are not currently evaluated. Refresher training is viewed by participants as a "rehashing of basic SPC all over again."

- Design of experiments needs to be championed by functional managers to establish a tight connection to workplace processes and results.

Safety Training

Safety training achieves its core purposes of increasing employee safety awareness, decreasing on-the-job injuries and illnesses, and ensuring compliance with employee health and safety regulations.

- In addition to the benefits of providing more immediate attention in cases of emergencies, E-Squad, First Aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and First Responder training have fostered positive feelings among employees about Zipco's concern for their welfare on and off the job.
- Applicable health and safety training programs required by state and federal occupational health and safety standards (for example, chemical safety training, hearing conservation, and respiratory protection training) are routinely accomplished and documented.
- Unless specifically implemented by corporate management, health and safety training is not effectively designed, developed, and delivered. Employees view some safety training, particularly hazardous chemical training, as "the same old stuff" given year after year with little relevance to the workplace.
- Employees have stated that they feel reluctant to report on-the-job injuries they view as nonserious for fear of spoiling their departments' safety records. Several employees have said that they and others had occasionally not sought first aid or medical attention for this reason.

Maintenance Training

It is difficult to determine whether maintenance training is achieving its purposes of providing job information and skills to new personnel and upgrading the maintenance skills of experienced personnel. Maintenance training is the largest and most active training component at Zipco, and although it is centrally coordinated, it lacks a cohesive set of training objectives and tracking of progress against those objectives. Evidence on the effectiveness of maintenance training is mixed.

- Identification of needs for training and performance improvement is primarily the responsibility of first-line maintenance supervisors. Some supervisors are more attuned to employee development needs than others, and, consequently, opportunities for performance gains are missed.

- Training resources and providers are identified, scheduled, and coordinated centrally by the maintenance training coordinator. (In 1990, there were 15 to 20 separate institutions and vendors that provided maintenance training for the plant.)
- Because of the rapid pace of technological change in this area, electrical-mechanical training must be updated and improved on a more regular basis than is currently the case.
- There is no clear evidence of performance gains from the overall maintenance training effort.

Computer Software and Systems

Computer training partially achieves its purpose of providing training and specific assistance that are otherwise unavailable to software users.

- Computer software and systems training is largely unstructured. That is, the trainers in this area rely on the nature of the assistance needed by the computer user and on the systems manuals provided by the computer and software manufacturers to design, develop, and deliver training.
- Although users of this training believe that the trainers in this area are quite knowledgeable and helpful to those requesting training, some concern has been voiced by computer users that this area of training at the plant goes largely unnoticed by many in need of it. This training should be more formally promoted at the plant, and there should be more aggressive follow-up with new computer users who have been given initial training in basic areas.
- As stated by one of the computer trainers: "If I had a month or two to develop a truly user-friendly HELP system, they really wouldn't need the training I provide here. Users could access assistance themselves."

Operator Qualification

Operator qualification training does not achieve its purpose of ensuring operator competence in equipment operation and production monitoring skills.

- There are no plantwide policies and procedures for when, how, or to whom operator qualification training applies.
- There is no clear connection between having received operator qualification training and improved performance as a production machine operator.

- There is no connection between receiving operator qualification training and individual work assignments made by supervisors (that is, untrained employees are assigned to cover weekend shifts or vacations, nonetheless).
- Management has not demonstrated its commitment to operator and production quality by putting teeth into the operator qualification program (for example, by shutting down the line if there is not a certified operator on duty).
- Employee perceptions of the operator qualifications program are generally confused or negative. Lack of objective criteria for selecting trainer-developers in this area has created tension among employees and contributed to their confusion.
- Written operator guides are outdated and do not follow any standard design. In addition, there are few job aids to guide operator performance. Operator guides and job aids should be logically connected to performance standards and the training program.
- There are no prescribed standards for evaluating operator qualification training and no methods (that is, accepted practices and forms) for documenting evaluation results.

Human Resources

Human resources training achieves its purpose of providing a range of management and employee training in support of human resource policies and programs.

- Employee training on human resource programs (that is, flex benefits training) is well designed, developed, and delivered. Employee satisfaction with and understanding of the content of this type of training are consistently high.
- Human resources training does not address day-to-day job performance issues in the workplace.

Team Action

Team action is not currently achieving its purpose of enhancing product quality and improving work systems through wider employee participation in operational problem solving.

- Team action training for employees is perceived as being too long and drawn out. Team members state that there are “too many team action games and not enough focus on the problems to be solved.”
- Team action facilitators need training for the improvement of their performance analysis skills to allow them to link more readily team action processes to solutions for important performance problems.

- Although Scholtes's *The Team Handbook* is an appropriate team action resource, its complexity serves to fragment rather than focus team action projects. Concepts and sections of the book that are key to work performance improvement need to be identified and emphasized.
- In addition to the personal growth and team dynamics experienced by team members involved in team action, a clear alignment must be established between team action processes, team goals, and Zipco business results. These connections are not apparent to team members, nor to team action facilitators in some current team action projects.
- Team action facilitators should be assigned to, and work directly with, specific operational units.

Questions for Discussion

1. How was the strategic audit used to transform the HRD function?
2. How was the change model used to shape the course of the intervention?
3. What role(s) should HRD play in effecting strategic change in organizations?
4. What sources of resistance can be expected when transforming traditional training into strategic HRD?
5. What advantages does the strategic audit offer as a change intervention?

The Authors

Richard J. Torraco is an assistant professor of human resource development in the Department of Vocational and Adult Education at the University of Nebraska. Torraco received his Ph.D. in education from the University of Minnesota in 1994. His research activities include the analysis of work, theory building in human resource development, and linking human resource development with organizational performance. He has published numerous articles on human resource development and has presented scholarly work at professional conferences both in the United States and abroad. He is currently researching the relationship between human resource development, performance improvement, and organizational outcomes.

Torraco's recent publications appear in *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *Human Resource Planning*, theory-to-practice research reports, and several scholarly papers. He is editor of the *Academy of Human Resource Development Conference Proceedings* for 1997 and 1998, and is serving as chair of the HRD Performance Preconference for the Academy of Human Resource Development.

Torraco teaches graduate courses at the University of Nebraska in the areas of foundations of HRD, HRD and business planning, organization development, instructional design, and career development. He has managed workplace health and safety programs and has served as an HRD consultant to business and industry for over 20 years.

Richard A. Swanson is a professor and director of the Human Resource Development Research Center at the University of Minnesota and senior partner of Swanson & Associates, Inc. Swanson is an internationally recognized authority on organizational change and performance improvement. During Swanson's 28 years of experience, he has performed consulting work for several of the largest corporations in the world. In 1995, ASTD established the "Richard A. Swanson Award for Excellence in Research." He is the founding editor of the *Human Resource Development Quarterly* and is presently serving as president of the Academy of Human Resource Development.

References

- Beckhard, R., and R. Harris. *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*. 2d edition. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987.
- Clark, J., and C. Krone. "Toward an Overall View of Organization Development in the Seventies." In J. Thomas and W. Bennis (Eds.), *Management of Change and Conflict*. Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1972.
- Cummings, T.G. and S. Srivastara. *Management of Work: A Socio-technical Systems Approach*. San Diego: University Associates, 1977.
- Cummings, T.G., and C.G. Worley. *Organizational Development and Change*. 6th edition. St. Paul, MN: West, 1997.
- Holmes, A.H., and W.S. Overmyer. *Basic Auditing*. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 1976.
- Jayaram, G. "Open Systems Planning." In W. Bennis, K. Benne, R. Chin, and K. Core (Eds.), *The Planning of Change*. 3d edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977.
- Lee, T.A. *The Evolution of Audit Thought and Practice*. New York: Garland, 1988.
- Lindberg, R.A., T. and Cohn. *Operations Auditing*. New York: American Management Association, 1972.
- Swanson, R.A. *Analysis for Improving Performance*. San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler, 1994.
- Swanson, R.A., and R.J. Torraco. *The Development and Field Testing of a Model for Auditing Training, Organization Development, and Quality Improvement Programs*. St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota Training and Development Research Center, 1993.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100